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State of Vermont
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To whom it may concern:

The purpose of this letter is to express support for managing their deer herd in Burlington's Intervale. While deer are an important native wildlife species, deer overpopulations are a major threat to biodiversity throughout our region, and is increasingly a problem in Vermont. Where deer are overpopulated, their browsing decreases forest diversity, which in turn threatens many of the benefits and functions provided by forests, from their ability to support water quality, attenuate floodwaters and protect infrastructure, to the habitat that they provide for Vermont's wildlife, their ability to sequester and store carbon and to be resilient and adaptive in a changing climate. Overpopulations of deer can also exacerbate other issues, such as non-native invasive plant infestations (they will eat native plants while mostly ignoring non-native plants), ticks and tick-borne disease, and the ability of farmers and gardeners to grow delicious food and beautiful horticultural plants.

While Vermont has been removed from the worst of this problem, our neighboring states regard overpopulations of deer as a major conservation problem, one of the most costly and tricky to deal with of any that they face. In these areas, extremely high deer herds have massively damaged their ecosystems while causing huge cultural problems, and controlling them requires costly and unpopular measures such as baiting and culling large numbers of deer with professional snipers, catching and sterilizing deer and installing high deer fences around farms, homes and yards. Due to many issues, including declining hunter numbers, increasingly warm winters, habitat fragmentation and development and increases in "posted" land, Vermont is increasingly dealing with the impacts of deer overpopulations. As a result, Vermont's Department of Fish and Wildlife changed deer hunting rules and regulations in 2020, largely to lower populations of deer where they are overabundant.

At Burlington's Intervale, it is clear that deer populations are high and are negatively impacting native biodiversity and the function of natural communities. This issue is of special importance due to the extreme density of rare and unusual natural communities, plants and animals in this section of the Winooski River, and its importance to both wildlife habitat and water quality in Lake Champlain. A number of partners, including the Intervale Center, the City of Burlington, Burlington Wildways and the Winooski Valley Park District have joined together to restore natural communities in this area, including controlling invasive plants.

Lowering the high deer population in this area actively – by killing deer -- is incredibly important to this coalition being able to reach their mission of diverse, connected healthy natural communities which support a range of native wildlife, ecosystem services, amazing recreational opportunities and keeping this area as beautiful place to live, work and play.

Sincerely,

Ethan Tapper
Chittenden County Forester